



NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY



**National Dialogue on
Standardizing Disaster Management Training
Curriculum in Pakistan
30th April 2025**

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT

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Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AKAH	Aga Khan Agency for Habitat
CBDRM	Community-Based Disaster Risk Management
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
GLOF	Glacial Lake Outburst Flooding
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIDM	National Institute of Disaster Management
PSQCA	Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority
SDC	Standards Development Centre
UN	United Nations
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator

1. Executive Summery

The National Dialogue on ‘Standardizing Disaster Management Training Curriculum in Pakistan’ was organized by the NDMA’s think tank, the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) on 30th April, 2025, in collaboration with the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) at NDMA HQ. The National Dialogue, attended by all provincial / regional disaster management authorities, humanitarian partners, government departments, academia and think tanks, was poised to be a transformative step toward building a coherent, inclusive, and future-ready disaster management training curriculum in Pakistan.

By fostering collaboration among government bodies, academic institutions, humanitarian actors, industry and communities, the dialogue put forward the foundation for a unified national training framework. This initiative focused on enhancing institutional capacity, reduce duplication, and ensure consistent, high-quality training based on standardized curriculum across sectors. Dialogue addressed the crucial gaps in the standardization of training and capacity building across all levels of disaster management, which is essential for ensuring a truly resilient response system.

For standardization, a national mechanism was proposed to align federal, provincial, and district-level efforts through an inclusive and integrated approach. Recommendations included creating a national knowledge base, forming an accreditation and certification council under NDMA, developing pooled funding mechanisms, and digitalizing community-level data to enhance early warning systems and local responsiveness.

The dialogue was followed by the consultative workshop on developing standardized training curriculum on Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM), the very first pilot project, as a proof of concept, presented in the dialogue. Participants, through an interactive group identified key gaps in current CBDRM approaches, explored emerging strategies, and proposed methods for standardization. Group discussions revealed that current CBDRM practices are challenged by limited hazard coverage, poor implementation of existing frameworks, and lack of institutional coordination. Key issues include the absence of standardized approaches, minimal community involvement, fragmented legislation, and weak financial and data systems.

To address these gaps, participants recommended establishing a centralized coordination mechanism involving NIDM, PDMA, and DDMA, guided by clear SOPs. They also proposed integrating anticipatory action, disaster risk financing, and technology including AI and social media into CBDRM curriculum. Nature-based solutions, volunteer engagement, and inclusive communication strategies were emphasized as essential components.

This dialogue was not a one-off event, but the first step in a long-term vision to transform Pakistan’s disaster preparedness landscape through standardized, high-quality, and context-sensitive training that reaches frontline responders, policy makers, and communities alike.

2. Introduction and Background

Pakistan, ranked as the 5th most vulnerable country to climate change, faces a wide range of climate-induced challenges including erratic weather patterns, fluctuating precipitation and temperatures, intensified tropical storms and coastal rains, sea water intrusion and glacial melt, glacial lake outburst flooding, sea level rise, biodiversity loss, desertification, and droughts.

Above situation underscores the urgent need for a robust, coherent, and future-ready disaster management system. Significant progress, in this respect, has been made, particularly through the establishment of the National Emergencies Operation Centre (NEOC) a cutting-edge, technology-driven platform designed to enhance proactive disaster management and climate intelligence. The NEOC leverages global satellite systems, web-based monitoring tools, and advanced analytical software to serve as a centralized hub for decision-making.

Alongside these advancements, the institutionalization of disaster risk reduction (DRR) by NDMA and its provincial counterparts marks a significant step forward. However a critical gap remains in the area of standardized training curriculum and capacity building across all levels of disaster management, which is essential for ensuring a truly resilient response system.

Currently, disaster management training in Pakistan is delivered by a multitude of stakeholders including government departments, UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, academic institutions, and private training centers. While these efforts are valuable, they often operate in silos, using varying curricula, methodologies, and thematic priorities. This lack of standardization leads to duplication of efforts, inconsistent quality of training, and misalignment with national disaster response objectives and goals.

Furthermore, with climate change intensifying the frequency and complexity of disasters, there is an increasing demand for a disaster management workforce equipped with uniform knowledge, skills, and competencies. A standardized national curriculum is essential not only for harmonizing training across sectors but also for institutionalizing disaster education in government systems, academia, and community platforms.

Above situation highlighted the necessity of national level dialogue, conducted by NIDM in collaboration with AKAH, address the indicated gaps and suggest a way forward through collective wisdom following the inclusive approach. It aimed to co-develop a nationally endorsed, modular training curriculum that reflects local priorities while aligning with global standards such as the SFDRR, SDGs, and the Paris Agreement.

The dialogue was conducted in two distinct sessions. The morning session featured a panel discussion comprising experts representing key NDMA partner organizations and the discussion focused on the strategic benefits and challenges of curriculum standardization, suggested modalities and on-ground implementation. Afternoon session, a proof of the concept, was the consultative workshop on standardizing CDBRM training curriculum leading the CDBRM manual, the very first output of the dialogue.

3. National Dialogue on Standardizing DM Training Curriculum

The national dialogue on Standardizing DM Training Curriculum brought together a diverse group of participants, including representatives from academia, national and international NGOs, UN agencies, and government institutions, fostering a collaborative and multi-sectoral approach to strengthening disaster management training regime by standardizing the training curriculum in Pakistan. More than 250 representatives from all sectors attended the dialogue.

Additionally, the dialogue sought to lay the foundation for a comprehensive national framework for certification, quality assurance, and continuous learning in disaster management, ensuring a coherent and future-ready approach to capacity building across Pakistan.

The key objectives of the National Dialogue were to:

- Launch a collaborative and inclusive process for standardizing DM training curriculum.
- Identify the mechanism for developing standardized training modules across sectors and regions.
- Ensure synergy among stakeholders to avoid duplication of efforts and optimize training resources.
- Lay the foundation for a long-term framework for progressive curriculum development and institutionalization.

3.1 Inaugural Session

Mr. Tanveer Paracha, Executive Director NIDM, welcomed participants and briefed about the agenda of day long activity. He emphasized on the importance of a unified training curriculum rooted in local needs and global best practices.



Chairman NDMA Lt. General Inam Haider Malik HI (M) commended the collaborative efforts of NDMA's think tank (NIDM) and AKAH in organizing the National Dialogue on the area of critical attention. Highlighting the recurring and increasing frequency of disasters, he emphasized on regional cooperation for proactive preparedness and systematic response

planning rooted in foresight and technology backed innovation. He underscored the importance of integrating modern tools such as Artificial Intelligence, digital platforms, and geospatial technologies into training programs to enhance risk mapping, early warning, and operational efficiency.

Chairman further advocated for enhanced coordination between civilian and military institutions, promoting a unified and integrated disaster response approach. He stressed that training curriculum must not remain static but should continuously evolve based on lessons learned from each disaster event and global best practices. This, he noted, would support the establishment of a decentralized, synergized response mechanism that is adaptive, inclusive, and responsive to the country's diverse risk landscape.

3.2 Panel Discussion

Six experts representing government, humanitarian stakeholders, practitioners and think tanks contributed in the panel discussion. Key points highlighted by each panelist are as under:



Ms. Nusrat Nasab (CEO, AKAH)

In her talk, Ms. Nusrat Nasab, CEO AKAH Pakistan, placed today's efforts within the broader historical evolution of training curriculum in Pakistan, tracing how local initiatives have gradually coalesced into national frameworks. She underscored the necessity of tailoring training curricula to local languages and cultural contexts, and of incorporating emotional intelligence skills so that responders can engage communities with both competence and compassion. Recognizing the accelerating impact of climate change, she urged that the curriculum be reviewed and updated regularly to encompass emerging, climate-induced hazards. She called for a synthesis of indigenous knowledge and scientific methodologies learnt arguing that true resilience arises when traditional coping strategies are validated and enhanced by modern risk-management techniques.



Ms. Ammara Amir Khattak (PSEA Coordinator, UNRC Office)

Ms. Ammara Amir Khattak drew attention to significant gaps within Pakistan's institutional frameworks for disaster risk management and disaster risk reduction (DRR), noting that without clear mandates and supportive legislation, even the best-designed curricula will struggle to affect change. She advocated for the development of tiered curriculum modules-tailored respectively for grassroots communities, mid-level planners, and senior decision makers to ensure that each stakeholder group gains the skills and knowledge most relevant to their roles. Emphasizing the need for inclusivity, Ms. Khattak indicated towards deliberate outreach to youth, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, ensuring these voices are not only represented in training but actively shape its content.



Mr. Scott Whoolery (Chief Field Operations, UNICEF Pakistan)

Mr. Scott Whoolery emphasized that the ultimate objective of standardizing the disaster management curriculum is to save lives and alleviate human suffering. He underscored the necessity of including clear roles, tools, and procedures, particularly for community responders, in the training curriculum so that each actor understands their responsibilities in an emergency. The panelist highlighted that at the grassroots level, curricula must prioritize simplicity and clarity to ensure effective uptake by local volunteers and first responders. He also advocated for embedding disaster risk management modules into the existing professional education of teachers, medical responders, and social workers, thereby strengthening community resilience through the wide-reaching influence of these key service providers.



Engr. Muhammad Ashraf Palari (Director SDC, PSQCA)

Engr. Muhammad Ashraf Palari outlined PSQCA's mandate to establish and regulate national standards, including those relevant to disaster risk management. He recommended the incorporation of ISO-aligned standards into DRM training curricula to ensure consistency, quality, and international best practices. Engr. Palari also stressed the importance of mandating compliance through formal accreditation processes and engaging key stakeholders particularly academic institutions to contribute to standard development, implementation, and continuous improvement.



Mr. Ikram-ul-Haque Syed (Senior Associate, Institute of Policy Studies)

Mr. Ikram-ul-Haque Syed drew attention upon international best practices in training design to inform Pakistan's disaster management training curriculum. He proposed a layered framework that weaves together governance principles, professional conduct standards, and operational modules, ensuring that trainees gain a holistic understanding of both policy and practice. Emphasizing the importance of contextual relevance, he called for community-informed content that reflects local needs and realities, as well as mechanisms for regular updates to address emerging hazards. Panelist further coined the term “customizable standardization” to describe an approach in which standard curricula can be dynamically adapted, with modular content evolving in response to shifting risk landscapes and stakeholder feedback.



Mr. Asad Zia Iqbal (Regional Humanitarian Capacity Building Lead, HLA, UK)



Mr. Asad Zia Iqbal emphasized that while individual-level training remains a valuable component of humanitarian preparedness, long-term impact can only be achieved by strengthening institutional capacities and embedding training within organizational systems and processes. Mr. Iqbal underscored that a standardized curriculum enables consistent skill-building across organizations, promotes interoperability during emergency responses, and ensures alignment with both national policies and international humanitarian standards. He noted that fragmented or ad hoc training initiatives often lead to duplication, inefficiencies, and gaps in critical areas of response. He concluded by affirming that standardized training, informed by evidence and contextual relevance, must serve as a core element of national disaster preparedness frameworks.

3.3 Q & A Session

Participants raised questions regarding balancing national standards with local relevance, the role of NGOs and community stakeholders, and the importance of accreditation and quality assurance. The panelists proposed to introduce accreditation systems and align training efforts with national disaster response priorities. Academic stakeholders highlighted the need to balance standardization with academic freedom and innovation, noting that universities can play a critical role in



integrating research and field realities into training content. Civil society participants stressed the importance of participatory approaches to curriculum design, ensuring that the lived experiences of disaster-affected communities are incorporated into formal training. The session concluded with a shared vision for the future: a nationally recognized, contextually adaptable training curriculum, implemented through accredited institutions, aligned with national disaster response systems, and informed by inclusive stakeholder engagement.



4. Consultative Workshop on Standardizing CBDRM Training Curriculum



The Consultative Workshop on the Standardized Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) Training Manual was convened as a key component of the broader effort to harmonize disaster management training across Pakistan. The workshop brought together, CBDRM practitioners, curriculum developers, disaster risk reduction experts, and representatives from

government, NGO's, INGO's and academia.

Key objectives included reviewing the curriculum structure, aligning content across regions, contextualizing materials for local relevance, and exploring the integration of innovative technology and tools, ensure inclusion of emerging concepts such as climate-smart preparedness, gender inclusivity, and sustainable community resilience. This session marked the first concrete output of the dialogue process, laying the groundwork for a unified and scalable approach to disaster risk management training in Pakistan.

4.1 Workshop Proceedings

The workshop was facilitated by the Mr. Falak Nawaz, the AKAH representative, flashing a formal presentation. He highlighting the critical need for standardizing the CBDRM curriculum nationwide and emphasized harmonizing training content and establishing a pool of qualified trainers to effectively cascade knowledge to grassroots levels. Mr. Falak presented the scheme of work that will be followed to draft a standardized national curriculum on CBDRM that included the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) at all PDMA's for provincial input and ownership. He indicated that community level FGDs will also be conducted to include the general public opinion.



Professor

Dr. Ashfaque Ahmad Shah, from University of Sargodha, asked for an internationally aligned certification framework for disaster risk reduction and emergency response in Pakistan. The framework proposed a tiered certification system with four progressive levels, ranging from community responders to master trainers. Overall, the proposal offered a strategic



pathway to strengthen disaster preparedness, institutional credibility, and national resilience through standardized, high-quality training.

Following the presentations, participants were engaged in an interactive group exercise. They were divided into four groups and guided by three key questions aimed at identifying gaps in current CBDRM practices, integrating emerging approaches, and standardizing methodologies across regions. Each group had one hour for discussion, followed by a 30-minute plenary session to present their findings and recommendations. This participatory format encouraged diverse inputs from multiple sectors and regions, offering practical insights to strengthen the inclusivity, coherence, and scalability of CBDRM efforts in Pakistan.



4.2 Gaps and Challenges in Current CBDRM Practices

- a) Current CBDRM practices across various provinces and districts face a range of interconnected challenges at the community, local government, and institutional levels. A primary issue is limited hazard coverage, with most programs focusing on a few well-known threats while ignoring evolving risks such as heat waves and climate-induced disasters. This gap restricts the preparedness and responsiveness of vulnerable communities.
- b) CBDRM tools and modules exist, they are often not translated into on-ground action. Moreover, institutionalization remains absent, with CBDRM approaches not embedded into the mainstream functioning of disaster management authorities. The failure to incorporate contextual considerations—including gender inclusion, access for marginalized groups, and local capacity and resources creates further inequities in risk reduction outcomes.
- c) Institutionally, lack of standardization across the country has led to fragmentation. Provinces often follow different legislations resulting in inconsistencies in CBDRM rollout. Additionally, bottom-up approaches remain underutilized, and local communities are frequently excluded from both the planning and implementation phases. There is also no central data bank to inform decision-making, and financial streams rarely reach communities, limiting the sustainability of local efforts. Finally,

the role of human activity in worsening climate change is often overlooked in community engagement strategies.

4.3 Emerging Concepts and Practices for Effective Localization in CBDRM

To address the existing gaps, several emerging practices and concepts should be integrated into CBDRM strategies that include:

- a) A collaborative approach instead of competition has emerged that may generate cohesive and effective outcomes avoiding duplication of efforts and resources.
- b) Anticipatory action, based on reliable Early Warning mechanism such as NEOC advisories and alerts, and climate change adaptation must be embedded into the core of CBDRM planning.
- c) Role of NEOC, a tech based platform for early warning and climate intelligence along with its products including seasonal forecasts, alerts, guidelines, public service messages, and multi-lingual action points using Pak NDMA Disaster Alert should be made part of CBDRM curriculum for timely preparedness, efficient Anticipatory Action and effective response at community level.
- d) A community level Disaster Risk Financing (DRF) mechanism should also be introduced for self-sustainability in times of crisis. In tandem, standardized assessment criteria and minimum learning outcomes should be created, allowing content to vary based on context but ensuring a common baseline across the country.
- e) Technological innovations offer powerful tools to strengthen CBDRM. Artificial intelligence can enhance risk mapping and early warning; social media can be used to disseminate culturally sensitive educational content; and digital civic education can cultivate a risk-aware mindset in both formal and informal education systems.
- f) Additionally, nature-based solutions, inclusive approaches, healthy nutritional practices to avoid health hazards, and post-disaster family link restoration must be emphasized.
- g) The inclusion of community volunteers through systems of registration, regular engagement, and recognition is crucial for sustaining CBDRM efforts. Complementary literacy programs can empower individuals to actively participate in resilience-building, while feedback mechanisms at all levels will enable continuous learning.



4.4 Strategies for Standardizing CBDRM Across Provinces and Districts

- a) To ensure consistency, quality, and scalability of CBDRM interventions, a national standardization framework must be adopted. This should begin with an integrated one-window approach that promotes collaboration across federal, provincial, and district levels. Institutional alignment is vital both in terms of legislative coordination and operational synchronization among disaster management authorities.
- b) Establishment of a centralized coordination mechanism involving NDMA's NIDM, PDMA, DDMA and other stakeholders supported by clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that define roles, responsibilities, and protocols for CBDRM implementation.
- c) Standardization should be guided by global best practices, local cultural values, indigenous knowledge, academic research and stakeholder engagement, ensuring that strategies are both evidence-based and locally relevant.
- d) There is a need to compile materials and datasets on CBDRM best practices, creating a national knowledge base to inform ongoing and future initiatives. Regular information sharing, meetings, and follow-ups will support coherence and enable real-time adjustments to policy and practice.
- e) A pooled fund mechanism led by NIDM can facilitate provincial adoption and scale-up of CBDRM capacity building programmes.
- f) The development of a national accreditation and certification mechanism may further formalize training and capacity development across all administrative tiers.



5. Key Take away of the National Dialogue

- a) Develop a unified national DRM training and curriculum development and implementation mechanism incorporating global best practices and local realities.
- b) Establish an Accreditation and Certification regime for ensuring consistency, quality, and relevance of education and training in the field.
- c) Regularly update training materials, at all tiers, to address emerging and climate-induced risks and emerging technologies.
- d) Institutionalize quality assurance, monitoring, and governance mechanisms.
- e) Create audience-specific modules, following tiered approach, for policy makers, tactical and operational responders, professionals, communities, youth, volunteers, media persons, and industrial responders.
- f) Ensure inclusion of marginalized groups including elderly, differently-abled, women, and children.
- g) Integrate DRR/M concepts into formal education at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.
- h) Promote interoperability among federal, provincial, and community-level agencies.
- i) Establish donor-supported DRM financing models to support readiness and rapid response through effective training programmes.
- j) Establish a pool fund contributed and managed by the humanitarian stakeholders for standardized training curriculum and joint capacity building programmes.
- k) Encourage knowledge-sharing of community practices and innovations across regions.
- l) Curriculum for Civil Services academies both at induction level and promotional courses to be addressed to.
- m) A robust regional cooperation mechanism for capacity development and knowledge sharing to be worked out.
- n) There is need for standardizing terminology across provinces to eliminate inconsistencies in risk classification, vulnerability assessments, and disaster planning labels.
- o) Embedding indigenous knowledge, and inclusive practices especially the active involvement of women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups in all stages of CBDRM, from planning to implementation.
- p) Emerging technologies such as mobile applications, AI-powered risk mapping, digital simulations, and social media to enhance communication, early warning dissemination, and community-based learning.
- q) Ensuring the long-term functionality of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) and other local committees was a recurring theme. Institutional support, clear mandate, regular refresher training, and linking CBDRM committees with local governance structures to maintain momentum is critical.
- r) Robust system for volunteer / trainee data collection, analysis, and sharing to inform evidence-based decision-making is very important.

6. Way Forward

- a) **National Coordination Mechanism for Standardization:** “National Working Group on Capacity and Curriculum Development” shall be established under the Disaster Management Coordination Forum (DMCF). Nomination from all DMCF members will be sought for the working group in next DMCF meeting. Different Thematic Committees will be constituted to revised and proposed updated standardized curricula for different training themes at all tiers including strategic, tactical, operational and community level. The national working group will consolidate inputs from the thematic committees into a comprehensive set of recommendations and submit to the DMCF for formal concurrence. The approved curriculum shall be disseminated for implementation across the country.
- b) **Terrain Specific Curricula:** Pakistan’s varied landscape- glaciers, high mountains, cold deserts, semi-arid, dry mountains, river deltas, deserts, flood plains and coastal zones-each present distinct climate risks and disaster management needs. Case studies and best practices shall be collected for each terrain to design training curricula, addressing region / zone specific training requirements.
- c) **Modular, Adaptive, and Inclusive Training Materials:** Training modules shall be created in a way that they are modular in structure, allowing customization based on local needs. Materials shall be accessible in local languages, easy to disseminate, and flexible enough to accommodate technological and literacy limitations.
- d) **Accreditation and Certification Mechanism:** Development of a national accreditation and certification mechanism shall be worked out to endorse all DM related trainings in the country. This will ensure quality control, incentivize participation, and build national capacity in disaster preparedness and response. A database of certified DM experts and trainers shall also be developed with digital credentials linked to a centralized registry accessible through the NDMA portal.
- e) **Institutionalize Feedback and Validation Mechanisms:** Validation workshops, pilot testing, and post-training reviews shall be conducted to refine the curriculum and improve real-world applicability. A robust mechanisms for regular feedback from trainers, community leaders, and institutional partners shall be developed.
- f) **Leverage Technology for Training, Monitoring, and EW:** Mobile-based tools, digital literacy initiatives, and AI-enabled early warning systems shall be Incorporated into training curricula including CBDRM. It will promote digital civic education to cultivate a disaster-aware culture, especially among youth, students and volunteers.
- g) **Regional Consultations for Contextual Validation:** Provincial and district-level consultations will be organized to ensure that the manuals reflects region-specific hazards, vulnerabilities, governance structures, and cultural contexts. These consultations should include voices from women, youth, indigenous communities,

and persons with disabilities. Provincial /regional consultations on CBDRM curriculum shall be conducted as per following plan:

22nd May 2025: Focus Group Discussion at PDMA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar

2nd June 2025: Focus Group Discussion at GBDMA, Gilgit

12th June 2025: Focus Group Discussion at PDMA Sindh, Karachi

18th June 2025: Focus Group Discussion at SDMA AJ&K, Muzaffarabad

20th June 2025: Focus Group Discussion at PDMA Balochistan, Quetta

24th June 2025: Focus Group Discussion at PDMA Punjab, Lahore

7. Conclusion

This national dialogue successfully brought to light the critical need for standardization in disaster management training in Pakistan. With contributions from experienced practitioners and institutional leaders, the event laid a strong foundation for developing an inclusive, adaptive, and effective national DM training curriculum. NDMA, with its partners, aims to lead this process with a commitment to resilience, equity, and sustainability. The recommendations and insights from this dialogue will directly inform future policy, training programs, and community engagement strategies.

The initiative to standardize disaster management training curricula represents a strategic advancement in Pakistan's disaster risk governance. Through a collaborative, evidence-driven process, this effort will contribute significantly to building institutional capacity, enhancing inter-agency coordination, and strengthening community resilience in the face of growing climate-induced and natural disasters.





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